

Orange leaps into IP

Tekelec to provide IP7 to U.K.'s wireless carrier

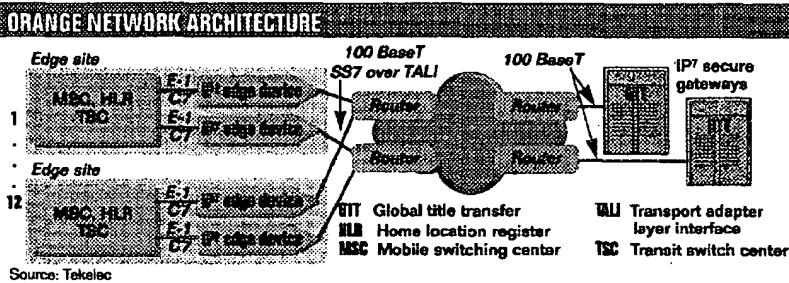
TIM McELLIGOTT

The U.K.'s Orange Personal Communications Services opened the international doors to Tekelec last week by signing a multimillion-dollar contract for a new IP/SS7 transport solution.

In what amounts to a complete overhaul of its SS7 infrastructure, Orange agreed to deploy two IP7 Secure Gateways and 24 IP7 Edge nodes in its GSM wireless network, beginning the first quarter of 2000. The contract includes management systems, integration, ongoing support and training.

This will be Tekelec's first international application of its IP7 products.

Orange's explosive growth to more than 4 million customers maxed out the capacity of its signaling network.



Source: Tekelec

After requesting information on a new signal transfer point (STP), Orange decided on a new direction for its signaling needs. "Rather than expand their network with additional STPs, [Orange] decided to replace the whole lot with an IP solution," said David Colbeck, vice president of Tekelec Europe. "They realized that they could, at the same time, take a paradigm jump in technology."

The IP-enabled SS7 solution positions Orange for adopting future third generation mobile technology. The architecture is the same, Colbeck said, but the immediate benefits will be a more flexible use of existing bandwidth and the ability to create new value-added services, such as high-speed data.

For Tekelec, the project is a

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breakthrough for several reasons, Colbeck said. Orange is the first European GSM player to move to an IP/SS7 signaling network. And before choosing Tekelec, Orange strictly used Nokia equipment.

The deployment of Tekelec's transport adapter layer interface (TALI) protocol strengthens its position as a possible standard interface between signaling gateways and other IP-enabled endpoints, such as service control points or media gateway controllers. Tekelec has submitted TALI to the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) for consideration as a standard protocol. Other IP/SS7 solution providers also have submitted their standards. Nortel Networks, for one, submitted its IPS7 protocol to the IETF last year.

Finally, the deal is a high-volume order that may stir the interest of other wireless carriers. "People will want to see it up and running and working before committing to it, but this concept of putting an IP

solution within the signaling network will work with any other standard GSM," Colbeck said.

Orange will deploy Tekelec's IP7 Edge devices at each of seven SS7



nodes in its mobile switching centers (see figure). The edge devices will act as signal converters, which convert the SS7 signaling messages to IP. They are deployed in pairs and, for now, sit directly in front of existing nodes.

"In later stages, when IP nodes are available, there will be no need for an edge. New IP-enabled nodes, which will be available on the

European market shortly, can be connected straight onto the network," Colbeck said.

The IP7 Secure Gateways will route and control the network. "It does all the global title translation that you would normally use an STP for," Colbeck said.

"The solution Tekelec is offering Orange fits just perfectly because it reduces any bottleneck within the SS7 network," said Paul Langmeyer, industry analyst for RHK. "The packet solution provides the statistical gain and dynamic ability to provide the throughput that allows you to reduce the congestion if you have a lot of activity within your SS7 network."

The need to grow its STPs and make better use of existing bandwidth were key drivers in Orange's decision to deploy an IP/SS7 solution, Colbeck said. Tekelec expects to complete the integration by the third quarter of 2000.

Orange officials were unavailable for comment. ☐

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